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# Theory-Based, Model-Based Community Practice

He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast.

*Leonardo da Vinci, artist and inventor*

It is the theory that decides what we can observe.

*Albert Einstein, physicist, philosopher, and Nobel laureate*

### A Conceptual Framework for Practice

Professional social work practice differs from nonprofessional practice in the use of social science theories and the professional values and ethics to guide professional practice. With theory-based practice, social workers will presumably use similar interventions in similar situations to produce similar results. Under the clearest circumstances, the propositions of practice theory would thus take the form “If X occurs under  $X_1$  conditions, do Y,” and professional training would primarily involve mastering the theories and their applications. So, for example, a proposition might be: “If you encounter group resistance to a new idea, then identify an opinion leader and try to persuade him or her, outside of the group context, to adopt your idea.”

Circumstances, however, seldom are uniform across even similar social situations, and the complexity of human beings and human relationships means that behavioral science theories cannot be applied quite as neatly as “if X occurs under  $X_1$  conditions, do Y.” It is more likely to be “X occurs under  $X_1 \dots n$  conditions.” Nor is there a single,

unified master theory of human behavior. So, in the above example, group resistance is not a simple concept; resistance can take many forms and can be explained in many different ways. A Freudian would talk about unconscious conflicts; a Skinnerian would consider rewards and punishments. Similarly, persuasion can take many different forms. Therefore, interventions to overcome resistance will vary. Discovering the kind of persuasion that works best for overcoming particular forms of resistance represents a further elaboration of theory, indeed an improvement, but one that still will not yield a simple rule.

In fact, the enormous complexity of social work practice means that often we cannot find a direct correspondence between a grand theory and practice. Basically, theory is explanation. Scientific theory, the conception of theory as generally used in science, is a set of systematic propositions to explain and/or predict phenomena according to rules of the particular scientific discipline. Social science theories rarely tell us exactly what to do.

Should social science theories be abandoned as useless? Not really. We need to develop a

conceptual framework for ourselves, namely a body of related concepts that help us understand and think about the specific phenomena we are encountering and help us make decisions about how to intervene. This framework is a case theory. Case theory, as discussed in Chapter 1, is an explanation and prediction of case phenomena; the problematic conditions, the specification of desired outcomes, the selection of intervention strategies and methods to change the condition and effect the desired outcomes, and an explanation of the prediction as to why and how the interventions will produce the outcomes. Since there is no single, unified grand theory of human behavior (for which we are thankful) or of social work practice, a community practitioner case theory will necessarily draw from a number of different theories refined through practice experience. In this chapter, we will briefly outline the social science theories we believe are most pertinent to developing case theory in community practice. It must also be remembered that the community practitioner has the challenge of developing the case theory for each case compatible with the principles of social justice.

**Theories for Understanding Community Practice**

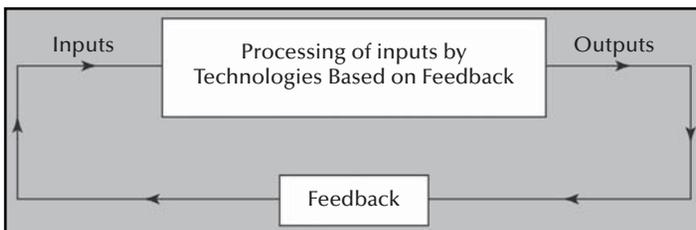
The theories discussed below in abbreviated fashion are meant as an introduction to those most pertinent for community practice. The reader is encouraged to pursue them in more detail from the literature.

**Systems Theory and Organizations**

System is a favorite concept and perhaps an over-used metaphor in social work. It is inherent in most models such as “person-in-environment”

(P-I-E) and the ecological model. Indeed, the notion of theory implies system. Chapter 1 made frequent use of system concept. A system can be viewed, most fundamentally, as an arrangement of entities, things, that interact to achieve a shared purpose or fulfill functions as a whole and its interrelated parts. Its guiding principle is organization (Hardina, 2002, pp. 49–50; Netting & O’Connor, 2002; Payne, 2005, pp. 142–180). A primary assumption underlying systems theory is that a well-integrated, smoothly functioning system is both possible and desirable. Examples of systems are mechanical systems such as computers and automobiles; human or social systems such as the Baltimore Orioles, a Department of Social Services, the AIDS Outreach Service of the health clinic; or something as grand as the global economy, the ecology or, for that matter, any individual human being. Figure 2.1 presents the model of a *general system*.

For a social system to exist, it must be separable from other systems and from its surroundings. It must have boundaries. At the same time, no human system can exist without relating to its environment, a proposition that defines the essence of an open system. Systems can be open and have exchanges with their environments or closed with no interactions with their environments. Most, if not all, social systems are open. To the extent that a system can remain closed—free of outside influences—the assumption that it is well integrated is tenable. But since human or social systems are inherently open, it is more reasonable to suggest that every social system is also inherently messy and that no human system can ever be perfectly integrated. Some degree of closure is necessary for a human system to function and remain intact or coherent. At the same time, every human system must exchange information and resources with other systems and act on that information, to maintain itself



**Figure 2.1.** The general system model.

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and flourish. In fact, the uniqueness of human systems is that they can process, create, and act on information; they can learn.

Thus we can say that every human system must negotiate its environment. Consequently, it must remain open to some degree, and it must manage some degree of uncertainty from external sources. If a human system cannot negotiate its environment, if it cannot process information well enough, then it must either exist in a protected milieu or die (Juba, 1997).

Social service agencies, like all organizations, can be viewed as open systems striving for stability. They were formed to carry out a particular mission; they are goal oriented. They also attempt to arrange their operations and decision-making rules to attain those goals. In short, they attempt to operate rationally.

Social service organizations, public, nonprofit, and proprietary, exist in an increasingly complex, demanding, dynamic, external milieu that poses a great deal of uncertainty for them. (It goes without saying that the same is true for social workers and for individual clients.) Due to such factors as the exponential growth of communication and information-processing technologies, previously unrelated elements in the environment may link up and bring about unpredictable reactions with far-reaching consequences (Emery & Trist, 1965). How do new computers and other information system technologies affect an organization's ability to compete for clients, referral sources, and revenue? How will the recession affect the demand for services and the availability of funds?

In this complex and constantly changing environment, organizational decision making can be very difficult. An organizational manager stands at the nexus of political, social, and economic streams of information and relationships, requiring new kinds of management skills (e.g., networking and coalition building), new forms of organizational structures (e.g., problem-solving teams with members from all levels of the organization), and much more familiarity with information-processing technologies than ever before. Both organizational managers and community practitioners need to learn the relevant group and organizational decision makers and how those systems operate. Social agencies will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8, *Using Your Agency*.

Practice knowledge of systems is essential. Systems theory postulates that systems are more than sums of their component parts. They share a common purpose, and the parts and their interaction are essential to a system fulfilling its purpose. To change a system, it is not necessary to change the entire system at once. If a part of a system is changed, the system changes. However, the system seeks quasi-stable equilibrium and will work to keep the components in their places. The practice applications of systems theory, including social systems, are discussed more fully in Part II, especially Chapter 10, *Using Networks and Networking*.

### Social Learning Theory

Behavioral approaches to social work practice are usually identified with various forms of individual and group therapy. They are based on the work of a number of important learning theorists such as I. P. Pavlov, B. F. Skinner, Joseph Wolpe, and Albert Bandura. Social learning ideas are also useful in community-based practice, especially in understanding and influencing the behavior of individuals and groups. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1997; Payne, 2005, pp. 119–141) indicates that personal and environmental influences are bidirectional, interactional, and interdependent. Over time they can become self-reinforcing, with less need for external stimuli and reinforcements. The processes of developing effective organization leaders, satisfied staff members, and influential social action strategies can benefit from understanding and using social learning concepts and principles. It is the basis for assertive skills training.

The basic assumption of social learning theory, a cognitive-behavioral construction of human behavior, is that human behavior is learned during interactions with other persons and with the social environment. This does not deny the presence of biological or psychological processes that produce emotions and thoughts. However, little credence is given to the idea that some sort of internal personality governs behavior. Thus, learning theorists are much more interested in observable behaviors and in the factors that produce and modify these behaviors.

A shorthand way of thinking about the factors that produce or modify behavior—that is,

the contingencies of social learning—is as cues, cognitions, and consequences (Silver, 1980). In Silver's words, "To understand social action, social learning looks to cues that occur prior in time, mental processes (cognitions) that mediate them, and rewarding or punishing consequences that follow. There is also feedback from consequences to cuing and thinking for future behavior. All together, these are the social learning *contingencies*" (p. 13). It follows from the old adage of *learning from experience*. Social learning and the cognitive-behavioral approaches are in tune with the contemporary emphasis on evidence-based practices.

Operant behavior, a major form of learned behavior, refers to activities that can be consciously controlled, such as talking or studying, and is influenced primarily by the positive or negative consequences that follow it in time. These consequences are commonly referred to as rewards or punishments. Reward behavior is positively reinforced and usually is maintained or increased, whereas behavior that is punished or not reinforced has a lower probability of being repeated. This is the classic stimulus–response pattern. Praise and attention are common examples of positive reinforcers; disapproval or a physical slap are examples of negative reinforcers or aversive stimuli. What constitutes positive and negative reinforcers is endless, but depends a great deal on how the individual thinks or feels about it. Pain to a sadist is a reward, not an aversion. That is to say, one's behavior is mediated by one's cognitions.

Social learning theory recognizes the importance of cognition in understanding and modifying human behavior. The human capacity to think and feel and to reflect on thoughts and perceptions, to believe, to remember the past and anticipate the future, and to develop goals—all of these affect how we behave. Social cognitive theory posits a model of reciprocal causation in which "behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally" (Bandura, 1989, p. 2). Thus, if I am a community worker, the manner in which I go about recruiting a prospect to join an AIDS education coalition may be influenced by how competent I think I am as a recruiter (cognition). My success may also be

affected by the prospect's prior positive or negative experiences with coalitions (consequences), as well as his or her strong belief in or skepticism about the value of coalitions for addressing a particular problem (cognition). If I succeed in forming the coalition, I will have modified the environment for addressing the AIDS problem, and this, in turn, may influence skeptics to join the effort, which may alter my perceptions of my personal competence or self-efficacy, and so on, in a continuous interactive causal chain involving behavior, cognition, and the environment.

The concepts of perceived individual self-efficacy and collective efficacy are central to social learning theory and particularly useful for community practitioners. Perceived individual self-efficacy is a self-appraisal of one's personal capacity to determine and carry out a goal-oriented course of action (Bandura, 1986, 1997). This perception stands between one's actual skills and knowledge and what one does in a given situation. It is the self-appraisal that leads to action or inaction. While a practitioner's skills may be quite good, his or her self-appraisal of the adequacy of these skills will affect how that worker performs or even responds to a challenge. A practitioner whose perceived self-efficacy is low may often avoid challenges; the worker whose self-appraisal of efficacy is high may seek them out.

Perceived self-efficacy is the foundation for belief bonding between a social work practitioner and the client. Belief bonding (Bisman, 1994, p. 79) is the shared perception, belief, and trust by both worker and client or constituent group that change is possible and they are competent and capable to bring about change. It is a bonding in the belief of their self-efficacy. Belief bonding appears to be a requisite for a committed change effort.

Individuals who have low efficacy expectations give up trying to accomplish a goal because they judge their skills to be inadequate (Bandura, 1982, 1997). Their inaction is akin to the concept of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), a mindset that comes about after repeated failure to exert influence over the decisions that affect one's life.

Still, some people keep on trying even after repeated failure. How can this apparent anomaly be explained? People who have high self-appraisals

of efficacy and who have been successful in influencing some of the decisions affecting their lives or their external environments may develop a sense of universal hopefulness. They believe that they can succeed and that others can as well, and so they are willing to take a chance on action on behalf of change when needed. Persons with high perceived self-efficacy and low outcome expectations because of an unrewarding or unresponsive environment may develop a sense of personal hopefulness if they believe they are not personally responsible for their failures but see that the system is deficient. Such individuals are likely to mistrust the political system and, under certain conditions, will engage in militant protest to change it (Bandura, 1982). Being personally hopeful, they believe they can succeed even if the system tries to stop them. Persons who are angry at political and social injustice and who have high personal self-efficacy and personal and universal hopefulness often make excellent leaders in community planning and social advocacy efforts.

Applying the concept of efficacy to groups, collective efficacy is defined as a shared perception (conscious or unconscious) by the group members about the group's ability to achieve its objectives (Pecukonis & Wenocur, 1994). Collective efficacy includes, but is more than the sum of, the individual members' perceptions of their individual efficacy. It is a property of the group as a whole, like the notion of group solidarity. A positive sense of collective efficacy is shaped by the experiences of the members while in the group and by the group's interactions, as a group, with its external environment. At the same time, these experiences also contribute greatly to the feeling of personal self-efficacy that each member comes to hold. When the collectivity is a social action group, successful experiences will greatly enhance feelings of personal worth and empowerment. Experiential learning (connecting experiences with knowing about oneself and the world) also creates opportunities for political consciousness raising (Gowdy, 1994), an important ingredient in overcoming oppression, which will be discussed later.

## Constructed Reality

Helping clients gain a greater degree of power over the organizations and institutions that shape

their lives is an important goal of social work practice. In the previous section, we proposed that both clients and social workers are more likely to take a step in that direction if they see the world as potentially changeable rather than fixed. The constructed reality or social constructionism is an interpretive, postmodernist theory of understanding the world obtained from interaction with the world (Payne, 2005, p. 58). The interaction is symbolic interaction. The theory holds that reality is a construction in the minds of the observer. It is constructed from the putative information, stimuli, and data from the environment shaped by the observer's values, culture, and experiences. While the elements of a putative reality may be there, we experience it except as we construct it. Our constructions are always dependent on our history, experiences, assumptions, and perceptual filters we use to interpret the experience and world.

Meaning is the major consideration in the social construction of reality, and it rests on the propositions that:

- Physical reality may exist but its social meaning is constructed.
- Physical events may exist but the meaning is a social construction.
- This social construction reflects the self-interest and social power of those constructing it.

Symbolic interactionism and social constructionism hold that it is not the things themselves, but the meaning of the things that is important and constitutes reality. The meaning is socially constructed, defined, and transmitted (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Blumer, 1969). Objective facts do not exist apart from the subjective meanings that people attach to them as they are being perceived. "Men *together* produce a human environment, with the totality of its socio-cultural and psychological formations" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 51). For example, in any society, people hold different kinds and amounts of riches, but the meaning of *rich*—who is rich and who is poor, what constitutes wealth and poverty—is subjectively experienced, socially defined, incorporated into individual consciousness or internalized through a process of socialization, and eventually taken as truth or reality. This latter process, "the process by which the externalized

products of human activity attain the character of objectivity is [called] *objectivation* [italics added]" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 60).

The reason we need the objectivation process is that we are by biological necessity social animals. Humans must interact with other humans and with the various elements in their external environments in order to survive and grow, and to do this they need a certain degree of stability or order. Social order and interpretations of reality are created through this process as people talk with each other about their experiences and validate their understanding of them, and as they develop established ways of doing things to accomplish their goals. Objectivation allows us to create a shared reality (Bergen & Luckmann, 1967; Greene & Blundo, 1999).

For example, the family is an institution whose meaning is very much in flux in U.S. society. Different segments of society are contending for acceptance of their definitions of family. Some have a very restrictive conception and others have a more inclusive definition of family, based on new and different roles for men and women and changing social and economic conditions, and the recognition of a range of acceptable sexual orientations. The traditional nuclear family in which Mom, a female, stays home with the kids and Dad, a male, is the breadwinner, if there ever were many of these families, has given way to many different kinds of families—families in which both parents work, where one parent is absent, where divorce and remarriage have resulted in blended families, where same-sex parents and children constitute a family unit, and so on. And just as the meaning of family is changing, so is the meaning of home and marriage.

The relationship between human beings as the creators of reality and the reality that is the product of the process is a dialectical one. Thus the constructions human beings produce—for example, the language we use, the meanings we derive, the roles we develop, and the organizations we form—all influence future constructions in a continuous back-and-forth process. "Externalization and objectivation are moments in a continuing dialectical process" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 61). The social order that human existence requires and creates is an order that is constantly being recreated as we negotiate our daily lives together. For community workers

who must frequently help their clients as well as themselves in negotiating complicated bureaucratic systems to get resources to survive and perform valued social roles, reality is neither predetermined nor fixed for all time. Moreover, it is incumbent on practitioners to validate the experiences of the individuals and groups with whom they work, to understand and share their constructions, and to help them change the constructions when the constructions hinder their realities.

Symbols, especially language, represent the major currency of social interaction through a body of conventionalized signs and shared rules for their usage. Language and other symbols are the tools for constructing reality. People give meaning and structure to their experiences and share them through language and other symbols, and language, in turn, structures and limits our thinking and beliefs. Feminists, for example, have argued that language is a major source of categorical thinking and helps to sustain the patriarchal order. In this view, male is a dominant category and "whatever is *not male* is female" (Sands & Nuccio, 1992, p. 491). Similarly, ethnocentric thinking expressed in census reports has, until recently, treated whites as a dominant category, while African-Americans have been defined as nonwhites. Meaning changes if we categorize people by black and everyone else as nonblack. Thus, language does not merely convey information "but is believed to thoroughly mediate everything that is known" (Pardeck, Murphy, & Choi, 1994, p. 343). Language is not limited to the here and now. People can use it to record and pass on the past as well as construct a future.

We live in a symbolic universe, and we are defined by our symbols. What is the meaning to you, say, of the United States' "star-spangled banner," the "stars and bars" of the Confederacy's "bonny blue flag," or the black ancient Hindu symbol or swastika on a scarlet banner? Until the 20th century the swastika, an almost universal symbol, stood for life, power, the sun, strength, and good luck. Think about the struggle of the United Farm Workers and the meaning of the Aztec blue eagle to the struggling *compinsinos*. Box 2.1 illustrates different world – or perhaps post-world – views. Think about the meaning of so many of the historical *truths* Americans learned in elementary school, such as that

**BOX 2.1.****Cultural Constructions of Reality: Different Worlds**

I had two very different sets of great-grandparents. A paternal great-grandfather was a Baptist circuit rider in the Ozark Mountains and the Oklahoma Indian Territory. He was a “hellfire and damnation” preacher with a strong belief in the literal power of the “Word.” Some people found great comfort and strength from his ministrations and counsel. Two of my maternal great-grandparents were Eastern Cherokee-Osage and had a quite different set of beliefs from my paternal great-grandfather. They believed that most things, especially living things, were part of a natural order and had part of the life spirit. Their shamen were able to minister to them and provide them with a sense of strength and worth even during the times of trouble.

Now how can this be? How can the same outcomes be achieved using two different sets of beliefs about of life and its purpose? How did they both produce results, and what has this to do with the art and science of social work intervention?

Both sets of beliefs have a system of propositions about the nature of things and how to explain reality and even occasionally predict and control reality. Essentially, both are theories. Both produced results, to a degree, with their respective clientele, and neither explanation was accepted as having value or worth by the clientele of the other. The systems of intervention and the explanatory theories were based on assumptions and beliefs that guided the construction of social reality.

Columbus discovered America, despite the obvious fact that people were living on the American continents when Columbus arrived, on their subsequent constructions of social realities.

Human organizations, institutions, and cultures develop their own ideologies and realities that reflect the composition of their membership and their most powerful stakeholders. Usually these constructions become reified; that is, they take on a life of their own or exist as entities apart from their human origins and makeup. The social constructions becomes reality. “Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 89).” To paraphrase an old John Ford, John Wayne western movie, “When the social construction becomes reified, go with the social construction as truth.”<sup>1</sup>

A third moment in the process of reality construction is internalization. Internalization is the incorporation of socially defined meanings, social constructions, into one’s own consciousness though a process of socialization. Socialization is “the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a segment of it” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 130). Primary socialization occurs early in childhood when the significant persons in a child’s life basically teach the child what the world is about and how to behave in it. During this

process, the significant others necessarily filter objective reality for the child through the lenses of their own selective definitions and personal idiosyncrasies. As the child bonds emotionally with these significant persons, she or he begins to establish an identity that is partially a reflection of the socializing agents. As a child continues to grow and relate to an expanding and ever more complex universe, secondary socialization into many new sub-worlds proceeds, mainly though the acquisition of role-related knowledge and skills. Socialization provides the necessary social stability for societies. It imparts on the new member or child the rules for behavior and thinking. The stronger the socialization, the less need for external social controls (Galston, 2004).

Social construction theory is central to social work practice. “Starting where the client is” requires understanding the client’s social constructions, and not reifying our own constructions. In the words of Saleebey (1994), “Practice is an intersection where the meanings of the worker (theories), the client (stories and narratives), and culture (myths, rituals, and themes) meet. Social workers must open themselves up to clients’ constructions of their individual and collective worlds (p. 351).” Social phenomena such as health, crime, and normalcy cannot be defined simply in terms of empirical, objective facts. They are embedded in a “web of meanings, created and sustained linguistically” (Pardeck, Murphy, & Choi, 1994, p. 345), that make up our

own and our clients' worlds. Effective social work practice requires skill in communications to understand and enter the assumptive worlds of our clients. "[C]lients are not merely consulted through the use of individualized treatment plans . . . but supply the interpretive context that is required for determining the nature of a presenting problem, a proper intervention, or a successful treatment outcome. This is true client-centered intervention" (Pardeck, Murphy, & Choi, 1994, p. 345). From a macro perspective, a constructionist approach also suggests that social workers help clients understand "the oppressive effects of dominant power institutions" (Saleebey, 1994, p. 358) and tune in to the countervailing knowledge available in their own communities (Reisch, Sherman, & Wenocur, 1981).

### Social Exchange Theory, Social Capital, and Power

Exchange theory (Blau, 1964, pp. 88–114; Homan, 1958; Specht, 1986; Turner, 1982, pp. 242–273) is basic to community and interorganizational practice, networking, social marketing, and, indeed, all practice. Briefly, exchange theory's central proposition is that people act in their self-interest as they define their self-interest. The self-interest can be economic, social, sexual, or psychological. Exchange is the act and process of obtaining something desired from someone by offering in return something valued by the other person. The products can be tangible or intangible (such as social behavior), and the exchanges do not have to consist of the same types of products. Exchanges can include counseling and community organization services for money, adoration and praise for compliant behavior, information for status, political influence for PAC donations or for votes, and so forth. Whether an exchange actually take place depends on whether the two parties can arrive at the terms of exchange that will leave each of them better off or at least not worse off, in their own estimation, after the exchange compared with alternative exchanges possible and available to them (Nasar, 2001).

An example of a social exchange occurs when a securely middle-class donor contributes to a homeless shelter. The donor makes a monetary donation to receive intangible products rather than shelter. The donor does not expect to use

the shelter either now or in the future but expects to receive good feelings of doing a generous deed, increased social status as a donor, and perhaps the rewards of a more humane social environment. The homeless shelter competes with all other alternative uses by the donor of the money that might provide the donor with good feelings, and a more humane social environment, or any other satisfaction. It's in the shelter's interests to see that the donor receives satisfaction in return for the donation.

Several conditions are necessary for exchanges to occur (Kotler, 1977):

1. At least one of the social units wants a specific response from one or more of the other social units.
2. Each social unit perceives the other social unit and is perceived of by the other social unit as being capable of delivering the benefits in return for the benefits it received. For transactions to occur, the involved parties require information about the products to be exchanged and a desire for the exchange product(s).
3. Each social unit communicates the capacity and willingness to deliver its benefits to the other social unit in return for desired benefits received. Given relevant information and desire, exchange theory holds that parties in a transaction select from all possible exchanges those that have the greatest ratio of benefits or rewards to costs. In social exchanges, this calculus is seldom as precise as in economic exchanges.

Social exchange theory is built on the operant conditioning aspects of social learning theory, an economic view of human relationships, and the pleasure–pain principle of behavior. People do things that reward them or give them pleasure and try to avoid things that punish or cost them or give pain.

All of the parties in an exchange field do not necessarily have direct relationships with each other at any given point in time. Two agencies, for example, might not have any direct transactions, but both might engage a common third organization. This is the network component of exchange theory. When Party A in an exchange field (be it an individual, a group, or an organization) can

accomplish its goals without relating to Party B, and vice versa, these parties can be said to be independent of each other. However, as soon as either party cannot achieve its ends without obtaining some needed product or resource from the other and exchanges begin to occur, they can be considered interdependent. Usually, interdependent relationships are not perfectly balanced; that is, Party A may need the resources that Party B controls much more than B needs what A has to offer. In fact, B may not need what A can offer at all. In this extremely imbalanced situation, when A has no or few other options than B for the resources, A may be said to be dependent on B. Imbalances in exchange relationships are the basis for power and influence among members of an exchange field.

Most definitions of power in social exchanges stem from the Weberian notion that power is “the chance of a man or of a number of men [i.e., people] to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action” (Gerth & Mills, 1958, p. 180). In other words, power is the ability to get what you want, when you want it, despite the opposition of other people, and in this case, the *you* is a decidedly masculine pronoun. Generally people exercise power to gain more and give less than those over whom power is exercised. Power is about gaining and losing, about control (Willer, 1999, p. 2).

Power is a function of the ability to control the resources that another party wants. Power is the capacity to produce intended and foreseen effects on others. Power has the intent of change in a particular way with the expectation of particular results (Willer, Lovaglia, & Markovsky, 1999, p. 231; Wrong, 1979).

Power is a gradient from none to total. Some social scientists use *influence* as a more inclusive and nuanced concept than power. Willer, Lovaglia, and Markovsky (1999, p. 230–231) define influence as the socially induced modification of beliefs, attitudes, or expectations without a use of sanctions and regardless of intent or effort to make change. We can influence behavior in certain directions even when it is not our intent to do so. Power and influence, as indicated in Box 2.2, rests on resources, coercion, and the willingness and capacity to use them.

Some authors therefore suggest that power can be usefully viewed as a medium of exchange,

a commodity that can be invested or consumed depending upon gains or losses (Banfield, 1961). Parties who need resources that others control can engage in various power-balancing and -enhancing strategies in order to bring about more favorable exchanges. For the sake of discussion, let us consider Party A as an action organization, a community group that is trying to get resources from Party B, a target organization—say, a large private university in the area that has resources that A needs. Since the community group is in a dependent position in this situation because the university holds the resources the community group needs, the university is in the power position in the relationship. To reduce the university’s power, the community group can adopt one of two approaches: either find some way to decrease its dependency or find some way to increase the university’s need for the community group. These approaches lend themselves to the following power-balancing strategies: competition, reevaluation, reciprocity, coalition, and coercion. Each of these strategies will now be described and will be applied more fully in the practice section.

**Competition.** Competition is controlled conflict when the parties in the competition recognize that they are seeking the same resource. Without recognition of the competition, conflict does not occur. Competition, as with most conflict, has the rules of the game between the competing parties (Deutsch, 1973; Kriesberg, 1982; Lauer, 1982). This strategy requires the community group to find more potential resource providers so that it can find other ways to meet its goals than making exchanges with the university. So long as the university has a monopoly on the resources that the community group needs, it will be dependent on the university. The university will have power. But if the community group can get the needed resources elsewhere, then the university’s power will be reduced.

**Reevaluation.** In this strategy, the community group changes its immediate goals so as not to need the university’s resources. If the university has any need for the community group’s resources, it may try to maintain A’s dependency on it by offering inducements or new advantages to sustain the exchange relationship.

**BOX 2.2.****Power Theory****Propositions:****On Resources (Rewards)**

1. If personal power is the ability to act in a desired manner, personal power ranges on a continuum from action in the face of no opposition to action in the face of extreme opposition, and
2. If social power or interpersonal power is the ability to have others or another act in a desired manner, the degree of power ranges from other(s) doing actions other(s) want to perform to other(s) doing actions other(s) don't want to perform, and
3. If action requires resources and different actions require different requisite resources, and
4. If everyone has some amount and kind of resources, and
5. If, resources are not equally distributed, *then*
6. Different actors have different requisite resources for different actions, *then*
7. Power, therefore, is not equally distributed across actions and actors.

**Willingness to Act**

1. If a requisite to power is the willingness or ability to use and manipulate resources to achieve ends and actions by other(s) to act, and
2. If requisite resources are not individually processed, *then*
3. Power rests on the ability to construct coalitions of requisite actors with the requisite resources.

**On Coercion (Pain and Punishment)**

1. If action can be induced by coercion, and
2. If coercion is the ability to impose physical, social, or psychological pain on others, and, secondarily, the ability to withhold essential resources, and
3. If actor(s) seek to avoid pain or require resources, and
4. If different actors and actions are vulnerable to different pain, and
5. If everyone has some ability to impose pain or withhold resources, and
6. If the capacity to impose pain or withhold resources is not equally distributed, *then*
7. Different actors have different capacities to impose requisite pain or withhold requisite resources to compel different actions, and
8. Power, therefore, is not equally distributed across actions and actors.

**Willingness to Act**

1. If a requisite to power is the willingness or ability to use and manipulate rewards, coercion, and resources to achieve ends and compel others to act, and
2. If requisite resources and the ability to coerce are not individually processed, *then*
3. Power rests on the ability to construct coalitions of requisite actors with the requisite resources or willingness and capacity to coerce.

**Reciprocity.** Reciprocity, the core of exchange theory, means that all gains and benefits carry with them obligations or a price. Reciprocity holds that each party in a social contract has both rights and responsibilities. Although the reciprocity relationship may not be symmetrical, it does require some complementarity. When a community accepts some responsibility for providing its members with a minimum living standard, it generally imposes corresponding behavioral expectations. The exact balance of the reciprocity is tempered by the power relationship between the parties in the relationship (Gouldner, 1960). Reciprocity will be explored more fully in Chapter 10 addressing Networking.

**Coalition.** A coalition is an alliance between individuals, groups, organizations, or even

nation-states through which they cooperate in joint action, each pursuing self-interest but joining together for a common cause to achieve their individual goals. This alliance may be temporary or a matter of convenience. The individual community group may not have much influence over the university, but an alliance of community groups might.

**Coercion.** Coercion is the ability to impose physical, economic, social, and emotional and psychological pain on others, and, secondarily, the ability to withhold essential resources from a party to compel that party to do what another party wants. As physical threats and actual harm to persons and property are normally illegal and immoral, this falls outside the bounds of professional acceptability. However, coercion in the

form of social and emotional pressure, damage to reputation, disruptive tactics, and withholding of resources often are used and are acceptable in community action. They may take the form of strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, and informational pickets. We distinguish physical coercion from political coercion and from the use of disruptive tactics that are normally legal, or sometimes illegal when faced with unfair laws. Coercive tactics were advocated by Alinsky (1969, 1971) as not only appropriate but essential in social action to get the target to bargain. We will discuss coercive tactics more fully in the practice section of the book.

Although the dynamics of power and exchange are important, many transactions in an exchange field do not carry heavy overtones of power. People are constantly relating to one another, exchanging information, and sharing resources without trying to extract advantages from the transaction. In fact, the more people exchange resources with each other, the greater the likelihood that reciprocal obligations will develop and that these will be governed by norms of fairness. As positive relationships develop, exchange partners who each obtain a desirable resource may be attracted to one another and may form cohesive associations such as support groups, networks, new organizations, coalitions, and the like.

In general, within the framework of social exchange theory, it is important to note that exchanges involving power require building relationships among people, making connections where none may have existed previously, and creating interdependencies. Since the potential for building relationships with other people is limitless, the implication is that power is neither limited as a resource nor confined to a set group of people. Rather, power can be viewed as a dynamic resource that is ever expandable. In the words of Lappé and Du Bois (1994):

Power, as it is being lived and learned, is neither fixed nor one-way. It is fluid. Based on relationships, it is dynamic. It changes as the attitudes and behavior of any party change. This understanding of power offers enormous possibilities: it suggests that by conscious attention to the importance of one's own actions, one can change others—even those who, under the old view of power, appear immovable. All this allows us to discover new sources of power within our reach (p. 54).

## Social Capital

Social capital is an *au courant* concept and theory in the social sciences. Social capital is viewed as an individual and a collective and community trait. It is the glue holding communities together (Huysman & Wulf, 2004, p. 1). Unfortunately for clarity, there are a variety of social capital definitions identified in the literature stemming from the highly contextual nature of social capital and the complexity of its conceptualization and operationalization. The social interactions and connections producing social capital can range from the highly informal to highly structured and formal. Huysman and Wulf (2004) identify social capital as the “network of ties of goodwill, mutual support, shared language, shared norms, social trust, and a sense of mutual obligation that people can derive value from” (p. 1). Trust between people appears to be an, if not the, essential ingredient in social capital's connectiveness (Arneil, 2006, pp. 224–240). It is what people get from being a member of a community that non-members don't get. Putnam (n.d.) holds that “(t)he central idea of social capital, in my view, is that networks and the associated norms of reciprocity have value. They have value for the people who are in them, and they have, at least in some instances, demonstrable externalities, so that there are both public and private faces of social capital.” The commonalities of most definitions of social capital are that they focus on social relations that have trust and productive benefits. Again, according to Putnam (2000), a community's social capital is the collective value of all its social networks and the reciprocity generated by these networks. The central idea of social capital “is that networks and the associated norms of reciprocity have value. They have value for the people who are in them, and they have, at least in some instances, demonstrable externalities, so that there are both public and private faces of social capital” (Putnam, n.d.). It is a key contributor to building and maintaining democracy.

Social capital is the social support and social obligations people and community acquire and owe through the norm of reciprocity. It is developed through the involvement of people in social interactions, social participation, and civic engagement. It is indigenous to social work's

community development and stands with social justice as indispensable to community practice. Ross (1967), as discussed in Chapter 1, defined community organization as “a process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives, orders (or ranks) these needs or objectives, develops the confidence and will to work at these needs or objectives, finds the resources (internal and/or external) to deal with these needs or objectives, takes action in respect to them, and in so doing extends and develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community” (p. 28). Effectively, Ross is describing a process of developing social capital.

The British sociologists Moyser and Perry (1997) also emphasize the community development and social justice components of social capital:

One of the most urgent problems facing western democracies is that of ‘exclusion’. Exclusion from group life means that a person lacks the ‘social capital’ which stems from participation in a ‘network of civic engagement’. Interaction with others can, according to the theory of social capital, be expected not merely to promote personal interests and collective benefits, but also to generate a significant side-benefit of social trust which can be self-reinforcing. In turn social capital may be convertible into ‘political capital’ in the sense of collective efficacy and political trust. (p. 43)

While all participation and social interaction produces social capital (Putnam, n.d.). Ladd (1999) emphasizes that “face-to-face groups to express shared interests is a key element of civic life. Such groups help resist pressures toward ‘mass society.’ They teach citizenship skills and extend social life beyond the family” (p. 16). Wolfe (1998) appears to concur and in research for his book *One Nation After All* found that Americans believe the social capital and sense of community is depleting and the nation is becoming too tertiary and libertarian, with civic engagement and social participation giving way to the television set and the Internet. Rather than the neighborhood and community of residence as the center of social engagement, the workplace is. The workplace requires in addition to intellectual and physical labor social and emotional effort and obligations as well. Nevertheless, the workplace is not a community. It is built around ends other than social engagement (productivity and profit), and the status and authority hierarchy

necessary for work coordination extends to its other social interactions. Workplace relationships are transient, feudal relationships. Relationships reflecting the workplace gradient and relationships between equals have the element of workplace competition.

A community’s level of social capital is generally directly associated with a range of positive social indicators (although not always true for individuals), from lower crime rates to happiness (Boneham & Sixsmith, 2006; Ohmer, 2008; Perry, Williams, Wallerstein, & Waitzkin, 2008; Putnam, n.d.; Pyles & Cross, 2008; Saegert & Winkel, 2004; Speer & Zippay, 2005).

However, some critics of the concept of social capital, such as Williams (2007), believe it is a less viable concept than social networks. It is social networks rather than social capital that produce meaningful public policy to address social injustice and structural inequities such as poverty, unemployment, and racism. This is because social capital is so vague a concept that it is difficult to operationalize compared to social networks. We will explore social capital again in our discussions of community and social networks.

### Interorganizational Theory

Much community practice involves establishing and managing relationships with other groups and organizations. The selection of theoretical material thus far presented provides the groundwork for many of the ideas that help us understand these interorganizational relations. In this section, we try to understand the behavior of groups and organizations rather than the individuals who make them up. Conceptually, interorganizational relationships’ unit of analysis is the organization or organizational subunit.

A proposition essential to interorganizational theory is that every organization is embedded in a larger network of groups and organizations that it must relate to in order to survive and prosper. Within this interorganizational network or exchange field, each organization must carve out a specific domain, or sphere of operation. Levine and White (1961, 1963) did the seminal work on domain theory. An agency’s domain is the claim for resources the agency stakes out for itself based on its purpose and objectives. The organizational domain usually involves some

combination of (a) human problem or need, (b) population or clientele, (c) technology or treatment methods, (d) geographic or catchment area, and (e) sources of fiscal and non-fiscal resources. While some of the domain may be shared and other parts may be in dispute, all parts cannot be shared or be in dispute if the agency is to maintain itself as a separate entity. For example, although there may be overlap, no two organizations serving the homeless will have identical domains. One may serve only women and the other, families. One may refuse substance abusers; another may accept all who come but require attendance at religious meetings. Geographic boundaries may vary. Some organizations may include an advocacy function and others only provide services to people.

The domain of an organization identifies the points at which it must relate to and rely on other organizations for resources to fulfill its mission. Mother's Kitchen, which provides hot meals to the needy in South Bostimore, will need serving, eating, and storage facilities, a supply of volunteers, a supply of food, health department approval, and so on. Joe's Van, which supplies coffee and sandwiches on winter weekends to homeless persons in South Bostimore, will need different kinds of volunteers, facilities, and supplies. Depending on an organization's domain, then, we can readily see that the structure and dynamics of its external environment will have a lot to do with the organization's ability to achieve its objectives. In some environments, resources are scarce; in others, they are plentiful. So, volunteers may be relatively easy or hard to find. There may or may not be a food bank to draw on for inexpensive staples. Some environments have many competitors or regulations, others few. During the economic recession of the early part of the 21st century, most resources, except for clients in need, became scarce. Complex organizations in dynamic environments have specialized positions or even whole departments to assist them in handling environmental transactions—for example, development and fundraising unit, a director of volunteers, a public relations department, and a lobbyist or governmental affairs division.

It is useful to conceptualize the set of external organizations and organizational subunits that a focal organization must deal with to accomplish its goals as a task environment (Thompson, 1967).

The task environment is the specific set of organizations, agencies, groups, and individuals with which the agency may exchange resources and services and with which it establishes specific modes of interaction, either competitive or cooperative, to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission. It is the part of the environment that can positively or negatively affect the agency's functioning and survival (Wernet, 1994; Zald, 1970). The task environment is influenced by the general environment's level of resources, the competition for resources by all alternative demands, the social ideology and philosophy of need meeting, and the socioeconomic demographics of the population (age distribution, family composition, income distribution, economic base, and so forth). A resource-rich task environment with a prevailing liberal ideology will support more social agencies than a poor environment with a conservative ideology.

The resources in the task environment do not constitute a system; they are merely a set of things until they are organized into a system to support the agency and its mission and objectives (Evan, 1963). While the concept of external environment is somewhat abstract and amorphous, the task environment concept can be delineated quite specifically. The task environment consists of six categories of components (Hasenfeld, 1983, pp. 61–63; Thompson, 1967). For any given organization, some environmental units may fit into more than one category.

1. *Providers of fiscal resources, labor, materials, equipment, and work space.* These may include providers of grants, contributions, fees for products or services, bequests, and so on. Organizations often have multiple sources of funds. Mother's Kitchen may receive federal funds channeled through the local mayor's office of homelessness services, as well as contributions from a sponsoring church. At the same time, Mother's Kitchen may receive space from a local church, office supplies from a local stationer, and maintenance supplies from a janitorial products company. The school of social work may be an important source of labor via fieldwork interns.
2. *Providers of legitimation and authority.* These may include regulatory bodies, accrediting groups, and individuals or organizations that

lend their prestige, support, or authority to the organization. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredits schools of social work. A school of social work may lend its support to a local agency's continuing education program. The dean of the school may serve on the board of directors of an agency serving the homeless, along with client representatives from the homeless union.

3. *Providers of clients or consumers.* These include those very important individuals and groups who make referrals to the agency, as well as the individuals and families who seek out the organization's services directly. The department of public welfare may be a major referral source of clients for Mother's Kitchen. Other clients may come on their own as word of mouth passes around on the streets. The South Bostimore Community Association may be a major source of referrals for a new health maintenance organization started by the local university hospital.
4. *Providers of complementary services.* These include other organizations whose products or services are needed by an organization in order to successfully do its job. Mother's Kitchen may use the university medical school for psychiatric consultations and a drug treatment center for substance abuse counseling services. The welfare department provides income maintenance for homeless families who use Mother's Kitchen.
5. *Consumers and recipients of an organization's products or services.* Social service agencies cannot operate without clients, a community organization cannot operate without members, and a school of social work must have students. Clients and consumers are critical to justifying an organization's legitimacy and claims for resources. So the consumers of an agency's services are the clients themselves, voluntarily or involuntarily, together with their social networks. Other organizations may also be consumers of an agency's products. For example, employers need to be available and willing to hire the graduates of the welfare department's employment training programs.
6. *Competitors.* Few organizations operate with a monopoly on consumers or clients and other resources necessary for them to function.

With human service organizations, other such agencies are frequently competing for the same clients or for fiscal resources from similar sources. Several schools of social work in the same city may compete for students and will try to carve out unique domains to reach into different markets to ensure a flow of applicants. Similarly, private family agencies are competing for clients with social work private practitioners and psychotherapists. Competition for funds is endemic to social agencies, and the competitors extend beyond the service sector. Resources for social services are invariably scarce, so the ability to compete successfully is a requirement for human services organization managers.

Interorganizational relations become truly interesting when we think about the concepts of domain and task environment as dynamic rather than static entities. Imagine an exchange field with multiple individuals, groups, and organizations, each of which has its own domains and task environments, but all of which are at least loosely connected, directly and indirectly. While enough order or consensus exists for these organizations to be able to get the resources they need to function (i.e., there is some level of domain consensus among the organizational players), thousands of exchanges are taking place. New organizational relationships are being formed and old ones altered, new needs and new information are emerging, new ideas are being created, available resources are shifting with political and economic developments, new players are entering the scene and old ones exiting, new domains are being carved out in response to new opportunities and constraints, and so on. No organizational domain is static. Modern organizational life, in short, is really interorganizational life, and it involves a continuous process of negotiation in a complex, constantly changing, and highly unpredictable environment (Aldrich, 1979; Emery & Trist, 1965). The power and exchange relations discussed in the previous section govern a good deal of this interorganizational behavior because the units of an organization's task environment represent interdependencies that the organization must establish and manage successfully to operate in its domain. These relationships and their will be discussed more fully in Chapter 10, Using Networks and Networking.

## Conflict Theory

There is a natural tendency among humans and social systems to seek social order and stability. Hence the processes of socialization and social control that support order seem very acceptable, while processes involving social conflict often make us uncomfortable. Yet, as we said earlier, conflict and disorder is also a natural and inevitable aspect of human life. Conflict is a relationship where two or more parties want the same scarce domains, resources, power, status, or control over values, and both act on their desire (Coser, 1964; Deutsch, 1973). Like the dilemma discussed in Chapter 1, both can't be fully satisfied. The conflict can be physical, emotional and psychological, or both. Conflict that is controlled is competition.

The dialectical conflict perspective in sociology, as propounded by theoreticians such as Karl Marx (Feuer, 1959) and Ralf Dahrendorf (1959), can further inform social work practice. Although their images of society differ, Marx and Dahrendorf share some basic assumptions about the nature of society (Turner, 1982) that help us to see social systems as dynamic entities. Both believe that (a) social systems systematically generate conflict, and therefore conflict is a pervasive feature of society; (b) conflict is generated by the opposed interests that are inevitably part of the social structure of society; (c) opposed interests derive from an unequal distribution of scarce resources and power among dominant and subordinate groups, and hence every society rests on the constraint of some of its members by others; (d) different interests tend to polarize into two conflict groups; (e) conflict is dialectical—that is, the resolution of one conflict creates a new set of opposed interests, which, under certain conditions, spawn further conflict; and (f) as a result of the ongoing conflict, social change is a pervasive feature of society.

For Marx (Feuer, 1959), conflict is rooted in the economic organization of society, especially the ownership of property and the subsequent class structure that evolves. Labor's production, the means by which men and women create their daily subsistence of goods and services, is central to Marxist thought. The efforts to control this production of the workers by the propertied classes directs cultural values and beliefs, religion

to give moral justification to the control, other systems of ideas, social relations, and the formation of a class structure. Under capitalism, the means of production (factories, corporations) are owned by capitalists rather than by the workers and the community. Because workers must now depend on capitalists to be able to earn a living, they are rendered powerless and exploitable. Labor becomes a commodity and workers become dehumanized to be bought and sold at the lowest possible price, moved and shaped, as the needs of capital dictate. In the modern world, Marx would argue that the movement of corporations to different parts of the United States or to foreign countries to gain tax advantages and find inexpensive labor is a manifestation of the dehumanized commoditization process. But capitalism also contains the seeds of its own destruction (dialectical materialism) in the dehumanization and regimentation of the workers. Therefore, as alienation sets in among the workers, a revolutionary class consciousness begins to develop. The workers begin to challenge the decisions of the ruling class, ultimately seeking to overthrow the system and replace capitalism with socialism and community control of production and its rewards.

For Dahrendorf (1959), writing a century after Marx, industrial strife in modern capitalist society represents only one important sphere of conflict. Still, conflict is pervasive, having a structural origin in the relations of dominance and submission that accompany social roles in any organized social system from a small group or formal organization to a community or even an entire society. If an authority structure exists (that is, a structure of roles containing power differentials), Dahrendorf calls these social systems imperatively coordinated associations. The differing roles in these imperatively coordinated associations lead to the differentiation of two quasi-groups with opposing latent interests. These quasi-groups are not yet organized, but when they become conscious of their mutual positions, they do organize into manifest interest groups that conflict over power and resources. This conflict eventually leads to change in the structure of social relationships. The nature, rapidity, and depth of the resultant change depend on empirically variable conditions, such as the degree of social mobility in the society and

the sanctions that the dominant group can impose. In the United States, the cultural wars reflect these conflicts.

The transformation of an aggregation of individuals who share a set of common, oppressive conditions into an interest group that will engage in conflict to change the situation is critical for conflict theorists and has relevance for social work advocates and community practitioners. A body of theories, collectively referred to as critical theories, address the common bond of oppression (Payne, 2005, pp. 227–315). They contain Freire's conscientisation theory (Freire, 1972), to help people understand and criticize how social institutions oppress them, and contemporary feminist theories. Critical theories are postmodernist, Foucaultian theories concerned with explaining the effects of power, social exclusion, and the prevailing constructions of knowledge (Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999, p. xvi). For social work, critical theories "placed power and political considerations as central to all levels of practice" (Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999, p. xvii). A main ingredient of the theories is the development of an awareness or consciousness of one's relative state of deprivation and the illegitimate positions of those in power. The National Organization for Women (NOW), in a manual on consciousness-raising (CR) groups, for example, wrote that "Feminist CR has one basic purpose: it raises the woman's consciousness, increases her complete awareness, of her oppression in a sexist society" (NOW, 1982, p. 3). Political CR is a method by which an oppressed group comes to understand its condition and becomes activated politically to change it (Berger, 1976, p. 122).

But developing this awareness is not easy. Marx argued that human beings are victims of a false consciousness born of the exploitive power of the capitalist system. For Gramsci, a neo-Marxist, an alliance of ruling-class factions maintains hegemony over the subordinate classes by means of ideology spread by the state, the media, and other powerful cultural institutions (Hall, 1977):

This means that the "definitions of reality," favorable to the dominant class fractions, and institutionalized in the spheres of civil life and the state, come to constitute the primary "lived reality" as such for the subordinate classes. . . . This operates, not because the dominant

classes can prescribe and proscribe, in detail, the mental content of the lives of subordinate classes (they too "live" in their own ideologies), but because they strive and to a degree succeed in *framing* all competing definitions of reality *within their range*, bringing all alternatives within their horizon of thought. They set the limits—mental and structural—within which subordinate classes "live" and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them. (pp. 332–333)

Those who make the rules generally win, especially if they can make up new rules as they go along. A capitalist system thus finds myriad ways to induce people to believe that happiness lies in the pursuit and achievement of material ends, and as we have seen in the Great Recession, it changed the rules as it went along.

Marxist and neo-Marxist theory applied to the role of the state as a capitalist institution in capitalist society has special relevance for social workers because most social workers either work directly as agents of government or work in proprietary and nonprofit organizations dependent on state dollars and corporate donations. Unlike conservative political economists, who want to greatly reduce the role of the state in regulating market system activities and its human costs, and unlike liberals, who view the state as a potential leveling force for reducing income disparities and alleviating distress, Marxist analysts view the state in a more complicated fashion. In the long term, they see it as serving the interests of the ruling class by maintaining social stability (Piven & Cloward, 1971) and a low-wage workforce. On an ongoing basis, they argue that the state mirrors the contradictions in the capitalist system; hence it is an arena for ideological and practical struggles over the distribution of income, benefits, and rights (Corrigan & Leonard, 1979). In the words of Fabricant and Burghardt (1992), "class struggle is . . . an ongoing, complex, and contentious relationship among actors in the state, in the economy, and in other social groups struggling over the direction and extent of state intervention. Ultimately, this struggle will either enhance the legitimacy of social services through a combination of expansion and restructuring . . . or encourage greater accumulation and unfettered private investment—with the resultant industrialization of social services" (p. 52).

If social workers and managers of social service agencies can become conscious and critical of themselves as actors in this struggle, they can share their awareness and analysis with their clients, and they can resist treating the problems of individual clients only as private troubles rather than as systemic dysfunctions.

### Additional Frameworks

Explanatory frameworks based on concepts of motivation, ecology, critique, difference, and complexity can also be applied to community practice. Key ideas will be briefly sketched here. These frameworks relate to the postmodern school, a multidisciplinary, intellectual movement highly influential since the 1980s, that challenges prior modern theories and assumptions (Butcher, Banks, Henderson with Robertson, 2007; Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999; Irving & Young, 2002; McCormack, 2001; Payne, 2005). A significant component of many forms of postmodernism theories is their more explicit recognition of the political, power, and social constructionism in the formulations of social science theory.

### Ecological Theories

Ecological theories draw on environmental, biological, and anthropological precepts and metaphors to highlight interconnections between social, geographic, and other factors. Ecological theories are a subset of systems theories. In social work they include the ecological approach and person-in-environment (P-I-E). Numerous illustrations make the point. Globalization has reinforced the ecological approaches. Drought in Australia increases the price of food in Mexico. Diseases are exchanged between China and New York and between Africa and the United States. U.S. movies and music influence cultures around the globe. Spicy foods from Third World countries replace blander food in Western diets. An ecological framework underscores such transactions, adaptations, and shaping (Kuper & Kuper, 1999).

Ecological theories remind us that human beings have ever-changing physical and cultural environments. Within 50 years, as some have predicted, most of the earth's people will live in

areas directly challenged by the rising sea levels due to global warming. How will this change in physical environment affect our grandchildren and the relationships between nations? Cultural environments also shape things as they change. Recognitions of gay unions as marriages will alter a series of legal statutes and military regulations. Will it bring greater general tolerance? Group advocacy has created a new cultural perspective that has now made it easier for all people to exercise civil rights.

Ideas about ecology and ecosystems of human groups have influenced the helping professions (Germain & Gittelman, 1995; Pardeck, 1996). Factors that affect social functioning and a new orientation for intervention include the following:

- Viewing context to be as important as the immediate situation
- Seeing how mutuality and interdependence suggest values and obligations beyond family, neighborhood, or nation to a global society
- Examining ways communities organize to maintain themselves in given areas
- Looking for ecological, natural, and impersonal influences in addition to personal causes of human problems

### Critical Theories

Critical theories, discussed earlier, have a macro-orientation, an interest in the social totality and the social production of meaning, and a focus on criticizing and changing contemporary society (Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999; Payne, 2005, pp. 227–250; Ritzer, 1992, p. 149). Critical theories are conflict theories and radical in ideology. A significant component of critical theories is their explicit recognition of the political, power, and social constructionism in the formulations of social science theory. Critical theory focuses on dominating institutions and structures and how the system works and on large-scale capitalistic structures and how they exploit local environments. It prompts compelling questions such as: “How is it possible that penal systems could have expanded so rapidly and that corporate interests could have become so ensconced in punishment practices without a significant critical discourse developing?”

(Washington, 1999, p. 1). The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world<sup>2</sup> and a homicide rate by firearms twice that of the next ranked country.<sup>3</sup> For most of the 20th century, the U.S. incarceration rate was about one-tenth of one percent, about the same as for other democratic, industrial nations. By the end of the Bush II presidency, the incarceration rate was up approximately 10 percent. Black imprisonment was over seven times higher than whites, up from four times higher in the middle of the 20th century. For both blacks and whites, the rates are higher than for any democratic nation in history (Cusac, 2009). America appears by the data to have become an exceptionally criminal nation or one with a very harsh justice system, or perhaps a bit of both. And the justice and penal systems are heavily privatized.

Critical theorists are aware of the loss of community and the need for meaningful discourse about fundamental values. They see the need for interrogation of knowledge and the received—all that comes to us as rules or givens (Swenson, 1998). Thus, rather than studying prejudice in an individual or group or legislative context, analysts also will study the role of MTV, the music cable television show watched by young people; for example, what are the cumulative effects of pro-violence, homophobic, sexist lyrics of rap musicians aired regularly on young listeners, or the growth of a proprietary society? Or, analysts might examine manipulations underlying the programming formats used by public television or by Univision and Telemundo. What does specialized television reveal about underlying patterns of culture? In social work application, professionals can seek to unmask forces in the community that perpetuate inequity and injustice or hate such as talk radio, politicians, and fundamentalist clergy.

We should challenge passivity. Here are some compelling facts on deaths in America. U.S. vital statistics reveal that the number of gun deaths for 2001 in the United States for all reasons (homicides, suicides, accidents, and reason not known) was over 29,250,<sup>4</sup> the number of deaths from flu was 63,729,<sup>5</sup> and the number of deaths from terrorism, essentially the 9/11 attack, was 3,030, with another 2,337 injuries.<sup>6</sup> All the deaths are tragic and the nation expended billions and reoriented itself, its government, and attitude

toward foreign nationals after 9/11 to prevent another 9/11, although the deaths were less than 11% of the gun deaths and 5% of the flu deaths for 2001. The nation expanded gun availability and has done little to ensure universal flu vaccinations. Gun and flu deaths can be greatly reduced for little public and private cost. Gun and flu deaths are neither more natural nor inevitable than terrorism, and result in far more deaths to Americans than does terrorism. The reasons for the inversion of public attention compared to deaths should be explored. It can't be the number of deaths and threat to life. What are the basic motivators? At the most basic level, critical theory can help social workers grasp the connections between individual insight and societal change (Dean & Fenby, 1989).

### Feminist Social Theories

Feminist social theories (there is no single feminist theory) examine the oppressive effects of power in gender social roles and relations. They are concerned with power, oppression, power sharing, consciousness raising in both genders, and social justice (Hardina, 2002; Payne, 2005, pp. 251–268). The differentiation of people, at home and abroad, that sometimes leads to “honor killings” of women and girls, dress and submission requirements for women, and increased use of date-rape drugs has traditionally been discussed as biology, customs, religion, or atrocities. Feminist theories, as critical theory, examines the gender power needs that underlie the culture and tradition. Growing out of a social movement and critical theory approach to social relations, feminist theories remain critical and activist, seeking world betterment, and may be the only theories in which those who developed them benefit so directly from the insights they provoke (Tong, 1992). Yet, they share much with other multidisciplinary, contemporary critical theories when feminist theories ask us to:

- relinquish conventional wisdom, thought categories, and dichotomies or binaries
- interrogate traditional beliefs about roles, behavior, socialization, work, conception
- examine as fundamental the use of power and oppression in gender social roles and relations.

“Where are the women?” While Marxism encourages us to see the world from the perspective of workers rather than bosses, feminism asks us to consider the vantage point of what traditionally was the invisible half of humanity. For instance, “feminist scholars reveal how gendered assumptions help to determine whose voices are privileged in ethnographic accounts” (Naples, 2000, p. 196). Among others, Hartsock (1998) introduced the idea of standpoint theory and feminist epistemology (ways of knowing). Feminist theories suggest that we question formal knowledge and core assumptions (Hyde, 1996; Kemp, 2001), since so much emanates from male-dominated scholarship.

For decades, the woman-focused perspective was considered more ideological than theoretical. Then, scholars began to realize how much had been missing from their usual scope of inquiry because women were seldom the objects of study, and their day-and-night experiences were so often ignored (Smith, 1999). Many fields have changed since addressing the question: “And what about the women?” (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1990). “The struggle against misogyny and for equality led to a broad array of social concerns: Social hierarchy, racism, warfare, violence [sports, domestic violence, pornography, and rape] and environmental destruction were seen to be the effects of men’s psychological need for domination and the social organization of patriarchy” (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1994, pp. 162–163). In your reviewing of feminist theories, consider and compare the 2005 Roberts, 2006 Alito, and 2009 Sotomayor Kagan Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for the U.S. Supreme Court on style, tone, and content of the senators’ questions to the nominees.

Insights about the role of gender have led social work to take a closer look at identity, difference, domination, and oppression. Concepts from feminist theories also have furthered an interest in experiential knowledge, personal narrative (telling your story), the actualities of people’s living, and bodily being (Harris, Bridger, Sachs, & Tallichet, 1995; Tangenberg, 2000). Davis (2002) argues that the new prominence of narrative in at least nine academic disciplines relates to renewed emphasis on “human agency and its efficacy” (p. 3). He goes on to note that earlier social movement theorists seemed stuck

on “structural and interest-oriented explanations, to the near exclusion of ideational factors (p. 4).” Narrative-based theories have the goal of recognition, an emphasis on how categories shape the way we see the world, insights regarding privilege, and an affirmation of resiliency. All of these features are common to new frameworks about race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation as well as gender (Weed & Shor, 1997).

The application of feminist theories is becoming more common in contemporary community practice (Handy & Kassam, 2007; Magee & Hurliaux, 2008; Mizrahi, 2007; Mizrahi & Lombie, 2007). Mizrahi’s (2007) examination of feminist organizers found that two related themes emerged regarding participants’ styles: (1) a developmental approach that focused on the relationship between the self/individual and the group/collective, and (2) an inclusive holistic approach. Feminist theories in practice, whatever the gender of the practitioner, aspire to give voice in societal discourse to previously silenced persons.

## Chaos Theory

Chaos theory and general systems theory stress mathematical interrelationships. Systems theory assumes order, integration, and logic, whereas chaos or complexity theory examines that which is less easily diagrammed. Newton’s mechanical, determined universe, similar to positivist social science’s view, is being replaced by one that is less predictable and more lifelike (Elsberg & Powers, 1992). Social work practice involves many components, changeable conditions, endless occurrences, and nonlinearity. Gleick (1987, p. 24) explains that “nonlinearity means that the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules.” Each client and case brings a unique twist to what may be a common situation, and the act of practice modifies the situation.

With its complexity of social environments, our profession can certainly relate to a dynamic view of reality in which seemingly random events and behavior can change the whole picture. For instance, the 2000 U.S. election made a mockery of academic models predicting who would be elected president; the predictors view the result as an outlier or random shock. Chaos scientists

say, hypothetically, that a butterfly in Tokyo creating Lilliputian turbulence might contribute—in combination with other events—to a storm in New York (Grobman, 1999; Ward, 1995). This notion of amplifying effects is suggested in the title of an article by Edward Lorenz: “Can the flap of a butterfly’s wing stir a tornado in Texas?” By curious coincidence, the “butterfly ballots” in one Florida county helped determine the outcome of a presidential election in favor of a Texan (whose brother was governor of Florida).

The postmodern scientific mind views the universe as constituted of forces of “disorder, diversity, instability, and non-linearity” (Best, 1991, p. 194). Unlike a linear analysis that might diagram regularity, parts, and progressions, a nonlinear analysis may sketch irregularity and what interferes, cooperates, or competes. Despite its name, chaos theory is not about total disorder because “even apparently random disorder may sometimes be patterned and to some extent accessible to probabilistic prediction” (Mattaini, 1990, p. 238), especially in short-term or nearby situations. Chaos theorists are intrigued by how tiny changes in initial conditions can have major consequences (Gleick, 1987). Paradoxically, complexity theory also relates to the concept of self-organization or spontaneous emergence of order (Kauffman, 1995). Mattaini (1990) notes the relevance to social work: “This theory offers promise for practice within a contextual perspective, while suggesting the need for ongoing monitoring of results of intervention that may not be entirely predictable” (p. 237).

Complex phenomena tend to be counterintuitive and to require information not yielded by simple models. Forrester (1969) states that complex systems are counterintuitive in that “they give indications that suggest corrective action which will often be ineffective or even adverse in results” (p. 9). For example, public housing in an area can deteriorate its decline due to reduced tax revenue for services by taking property off the tax rolls, reducing property values and hence taxes, and increasing demands for services by aggregating poor people. Such ideas as counterintuition help us think about cause and effect in a more analytical way, show us how to acquire new understandings, and allow us to view chaos

as a beneficial force (Bolland & Atherton, 1999; Warren, Franklin, & Streeter, 1998; Wheatley, 2001).

### The Field of Action in Community Practice

For direct service practitioners, community practice often starts with understanding the community and cultural and community influences on themselves and their clients as mutual participants in the larger system (Pardeck, 1996). It moves to community assessment for finding relevant resources, discovering or building referral and support networks, and ultimately perhaps social action. Practice interventions move to a social system focus either to address and resolve system malfunctions (e.g., to replace a local school that has become physically unsafe) or to create development opportunities. To do that, we need theories that will help us to understand the behavior of individuals as community actors; the behavior of community groups and organizations; relationships of power and exchange among individuals, groups, and organizations; and individual and group ideologies and reality constructions (Silver, 1980).

A useful way of conceptualizing community practice, then, is as a series of interventions that take place in a field of action or exchange. The important components of the field include:

- individuals, groups, and organizations or organizational subunits
- the main elements that these members exchange—namely, resources and information
- influential aspects of the relationships among the members—namely, power balances and rules of exchange, as well as individual and group ideologies, including values, beliefs, and feelings

Imagine a community practitioner addressing the spread of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) among adolescents in a particular community by building a coalition that will mount an AIDS education project. The social worker need to consider the potential elements of the arena in which the interventions will take place (the action field) to assess the scope of the project. Because the problem is

complex, the composition of the action field will also be complicated. Elements in the field also will vary in importance at different points in the intervention process. Some of the main components of an action field in this case might be the following:

1. Adolescent groups, gangs, organizations, informal cliques or friendship networks, and individuals (by no means a monolithic group)
2. Parent groups and individuals (also not a monolithic body)
3. Groups and organizations serving adolescents, such as high schools, recreation centers, clubs, churches, and so on
4. Public health and social service organizations (nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental), such as the health department and the organization you work for, the AIDS outreach service of the health clinic, Planned Parenthood, and the department of health and mental hygiene of your state
5. Civic and community associations, such as PTAs, sororities and fraternities, neighborhood associations, and the Knights of Columbus
6. Churches and religious organizations
7. Elected officials and governmental bodies such as legislative finance committees
8. The media, including possible web networking services
9. Ideologies of these individuals and groups, including the way they view AIDS and the problem among adolescents, as well as their political, social, professional, and religious beliefs or philosophies
10. Relationships of exchange and power differentials that may exist among the members of the field, and the information and resources that the various members may control

Obviously, just knowing the potential components of the action field does not tell the worker how to go about building an effective coalition. The professional needs some theories about how this community operates to decide what to do to accomplish the task. The worker also needs to know something about how the members of the field relate to each other and how they might react to the proposed project.

## Traditional Models of Community Organization

### Classic Conceptual Scheme

Like numerous formulations of community practice and social change, organizing has been categorized in a variety of ways (Fisher, 1995; Mondros & Wilson, 1990). Weil (1996) holds that “A conceptual model or framework is a way of putting together concepts or ideas. It provides a design for how to think about or illustrate the structure and interworking of related concepts—a structure, a design or a system. A conceptual model is intended to illustrate the operation of a theoretical approach, and to build or demonstrate knowledge. . . . Conceptual models of community practice illustrate the diverse ways that community practice is conceived” (pp. 1–2). Weil (1996) goes on to say that models of social intervention hold an intermediate place between theory and practice skills, since they “embody theory and illustrate the actions that put theory into practice.” Hardina (2002, p. 45) gives practice models a function of linking theory, intervention, and outcomes.

A word is in order regarding models as we begin to explore them. Models are not empirical reality. They are abstractions, simplifications, of empirical reality, but should contain the essential elements and structure of reality. Models are ideas with empirical referents, but they are not the empirical referents themselves. Models are complex ideas and as such they tend to be summative.

Most social workers are familiar with Rothman’s highly referenced conceptual model of community practice. If not, we will briefly review it here. In 1968, Rothman devised a three-pronged model, a community practice framework that social work students everywhere have studied ever since. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the prongs are locality development, social planning, and social action. In Rothman’s (1996) own words, his three approaches include:

1. the community-building emphasis of locality development, with its attention to community competency and social integration
2. the data-based problem-solving orientation of social planning/social policy, with its reliance on expertise

3. the advocacy thrust of social action, with its commitment to fundamental change and social justice (p. 71)

**Application of the Model<sup>7</sup>**

The Rothman model is easy to apply in real life. For example, Harriman, a low-income rural mountain community of about 6,000 people in Roane County, Tennessee, coal country, suffered one of the worst environmental disasters in modern America when, at about 1 a.m. on December 22, 2008, the wall of the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Kingston Fossil Plant’s colossal 80-acre pond, filled with fly ash from burning coal for electricity, collapsed, releasing a 1-billion-gallon sea of sludge, covering countryside and waterways. The tidal surge crumpled docks, wiped out roads and railroad tracks, and ingested a small

island. The disaster was the product of all level of government’s failure to do their job. Although no one was harmed, there are long-term health effects from the ash’s harmful contaminants, including arsenic. In addition to property and home losses, there are the threats to Roane County’s economy and culture in the beautiful Appalachian hill country.

Community intervention is imperative. Intervention modes will overlap. No single approach to organizing is sufficient, and all are necessary for social justice. The degree of use depends on how the situation unfolds.

**Locality Development**

A community organizer engaged in locality development would recruit Harriman residents to work together to supervise and involve

**BOX 2.3. Rothman’s (1968) Community Practice Modalities and Conceptual Foundations**

Concept or variable	Locality development	Social planning	Social action
Domain emphasis	Domain is the local community; development of a community domain	Emphasis on functional community domain linkages and consensus	Recognition of action group’s domains, redistribution of task environment’s domains
Nature of exchange	Positive, internal to community	Positive between community structures, institutions, organizations	Positive with action group and coalition, often negative with targets
Networking	Within community, across and within interest areas, broad consensus	Within functional areas, linking to a goal, consensus of core functions	Like-minded to be part of action group, movement of targets into action group, advocacy
Conception of community	Horizontal local geographic area emphasized and valued over vertical linkages.	Functional community, often beyond locality	Primarily functional within locality and emphasis on a functionally disadvantaged group
Power and empowerment	Power shared, community empowerment a primary goal	Power focused, emphasize concerting power for goals achievement, empowerment a byproduct	Power redistribution from target to action group, empowerment of action group a primary goal
Task or process emphasis	Process	Task	Task external to action group, process within
Skills most emphasized	Enabling, coordinating, mediating, teaching	Fact gathering, analyzing, facilitating, implementing	Advocacy, brokering, negotiating, bargaining, teaching

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themselves in the work of range of governmental and quasi-governmental agencies from the Tennessee Valley Authority, Roane County governmental agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, and the Army Corps of Engineers, among others. It is essential that community residents be involved to monitor and work with these agencies as the agencies had failed them in the past. There are also a range of voluntary agencies involved, such as Greenpeace, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, the Southern Environmental Law Center, and, most importantly, United Mountain Defense (UMD). UMD engaged in a locality development function by engaging in door-to-door active “listening projects” to better understand the needs of the community and organizing community meetings. The locality development was necessary to build community solidarity for subsequent legal and social action.

### Social Planning

The Harriman community, UMD, and the myriad other agencies engaged in social planning in their efforts to identify appropriate funding resources, such as designation as a Superfund site, Community Development Block Grants, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Small Towns Environment Program, and to spur local and state government to use federal stimulus funds. Harriman is faced with the task of rebuilding itself, along with the cleanup.

### Social Action

It was imperative that Harriman residents become activists. Political, legal, and social action is necessary to make sure that the Tennessee Valley Authority and the other negligent agencies responsible for the disaster be held accountable. Fortunately, the community has advocates such as UMD, the Southern Environmental Law Center, Earth Justice, and Greenpeace.

### Locality or Community Development

Locality development seeks to pull together diverse elements of an area by using individual

and collective strengths to improve social and economic conditions. Community (locality) development and building situs is a geographically defined target area, ideally with some degree of shared social bonding and identification. It recognizes community assets, with the people being the greatest asset, and available resources as well as community needs. Locality development is an enabling and social capital building approach with community participation essential. Its process goal is collective change to empower disadvantaged citizens to more effectively define and advance their life chances. Locality development is comprehensive development to integrate economic, physical, and human development. Inevitably it requires social action.

Rothman (1987) turns to pioneer Arthur Dunham for development themes—“democratic procedures, voluntary cooperation, self-help, development of indigenous leadership, and educational objectives” (p. 5)—that are still relevant today. Community processes are to build community cohesion and social capital. Community empowerment is a primary goal. Community empowerment and collective efficacy, as well as the individual self-efficacy of the participants, are products of successful community actions and projects. New voices are heard. Difficult people must be heard and involved, and their strengths added to the community. The locality developer role calls for self-discipline, suggests Rothman (2000): “The role is complicated and in some respects runs against certain human propensities, calling on practitioners to stay in the background and neutralize their contribution; to give credit to local participants rather than to themselves; to maintain positive working relationships with opponents and vexatious elements in the community; and to refrain from proposing solutions, even when practitioners possess requisite knowledge, so that solutions will emerge from local residents themselves” (p. 103).

### Social Planning

Social planning uses data, theory, history, and the present to objectively construct a future scenario of reality. Social uses available data and collects new data to define, create, and meet

future social conditions efficiently. It is a systematic, task-oriented style of organizing requiring mastery of data collection and analysis, social theories, and bureaucratic complexity. Social planning's community development function often requires development and coordination of community agencies' services to meet community needs, facilitate and translate between groups with different agendas, and educate and raise the consciousness for segments of the groups not initially interested in the social problem and possible solutions. To ensure the involvement of a cross-section of the population, the social planner will become a community developer and hold meetings and hearings and secure representatives from different sectors. The social planner plays the roles of community liaison, facilitator, outreach worker, interpreter of regulations and policies, translator between groups with different knowledge bases, and consciousness raiser for groups not initially interested in the needs of the target population.

### Social Action

Activists on the right and left have used tactics associated with this model. The social action approach can involve either radical, fundamental change goals or reformist, incremental goals. It can pursue social justice or a totalitarian goal, although both right and left generally use the language of social justice and civil rights. Social action organizations range from the right's Christian Coalition, Human Life Alliance, and the Institute for Justice to more centrist and leftist organizations such as Americans United for Separation of Church and State, UMD, and Southern Poverty Law Center. Social action confronts—in different degrees and with a variety of tactics—hierarchical power relationships within a community in order to benefit people who feel powerless, socially vulnerable populations, or those locked out of decision processes. Social action's aim is to develop, redistribute, and control community statuses and resources, especially social power, and to alter community behavior patterns and relations.

The adversarial methodologies of social action are used by citizen coalitions throughout the world. U.S. farmers brought their tractors to Washington to disrupt traffic, anti-abortion

zealots blocked clinics and harassed potential patients, students took to the streets in Iran after its 2009 election, anti-health care reform "Astroturf" organizers yelled down Congress members at 2009 community forums, and workers held sit-ins in factories closed in the 2009 recession. The aim can be to make basic changes in major institutions or community practices (Rothman, 1987, p. 6) or in the policies of formal organizations (p. 18). Social action tactics include consciousness-raising activities, coalitions, non-violent direct action (including inaction as strikes) and civil disobedience, and political and social marketing campaigns. We will discuss these tactics more fully later in the text.

### Composite Nature of Community Organization

As Rothman recognized, actual organizations and ongoing projects use all three organizing approaches combined in various forms. The efforts in Harriman by the varying groups, probably still in process, combined the three approaches. In actual practice, clinical and community work methodologies overlap, case management requires advocacy, and social action requires a locality development in its coalition development and social planning skills. The Highlander Research and Education Center outside Knoxville, Tennessee, has been combining education and training with action and community development, social planning, and social action so the people of the South can engage their environmental and social problems. Dans la Rue (On the Street) in Montreal, Canada, creatively combined locality development with social action. Initially, street kids were asked what they needed from a mobile van designed to serve them in their territory, and eventually a shelter was created that the street kids staffed and named the Bunker. Such locality development service projects led to advocacy and then to "the organization of a demonstration against the increased number of police harassment and brutality cases reported" by homeless residents of the city.

### Related Community Intervention Model

Based on assessment, Rothman wanted community practitioners to fit their mode of action to

the situation at hand. According to Jeffries (1996) of the United Kingdom, “Rothman’s identification of three models of community organization practice has permeated the community work literature on both sides of the Atlantic” (p. 102). Reworking Rothman, Jeffries proposes a four-square model of community practice. To oversimplify, Jeffries’ approach renames Rothman’s first two modes and divides social action into nonviolent direct action and coalition building and campaigns.

Jeffries (1996) renames locality development “capacity and awareness promotion” because she believes “the ability is there, it just needs to be given a chance to blossom” (p. 115). This approach or mode of organizing starts with the personal concerns of neighborhood residents and moves on to “developing or giving scope for and recognition to the skills, or capacities of community groups” (p. 114). Community workers in this mode may call upon their own “interpersonal, educational and group work skills” (p. 115). She renames social planning “partnership promotion” because, rather than facilitating service delivery, the current emphasis is on collaborative planning with the community “to enable the community to act for itself” (p. 114). Ultimately, there could be “community management of services or community economic development” (p. 114) through this mode of organizing. In the third approach, having developed confidence and conviction—often from capacity and awareness promotion activities—community members can be ready to “get the attention of those in authority . . . and an unsympathetic power structure” (p. 116) using the nonviolent direct action mode of organizing. Community workers in this mode will strive to “coalesce interests into action groups” (p. 115). Such change-oriented protest work, often local or legislative in nature, can be contrasted with social campaigns:

Clearly social campaigns have long been a key feature not only of single issue organizing but also of radical, change-oriented social movements. While the former often have a more specific objective and may align themselves with organizational elites, the latter are more comprehensive in scope. They may be seeking social justice or be promoting an ecological consciousness in society. . . . These days campaign organizers can take advantage of information technology to

build country-wide and international campaign coalitions. Yet to generate the mass mobilization that may be necessary to take on multi-nationals or an unsympathetic government, it is important also to have strong community level organization. (Jeffries, 1996, p. 117)

Thus, Jeffries formulates four up-to-date, relevant, and serviceable characterizations of organizing. We suggest an example for each mode (our examples are in brackets):

- Capacity and awareness promotion [Amerindian tribal gaming as economic development]
- Partnership promotion [local neighborhood-police anticrime efforts]
- Nonviolent direct action [Philadelphia voters confronting city government officials protesting library closing as cost-savings]
- Social campaigns [passing health care legislation]

British community practice theorists (Butcher, Banks, Henderson with Robertson, 2007) also have developed another related model of community practice that unites Rothman’s three modalities. The model is labeled Critical Community Practice and is rooted in social justice and critical theory. Critical community practice is less a package of methodologies and more an approach to community practice. It entails an “open-minded, reflective and thoughtful approach” or a “critical consciousness” to practice with a careful attention to the context of practice. The model also embraces a strong normative dimension of values and assumptions of social justice. There are *oughts* and *shoulds* in the model, not just what works. The model requires a holistic view of goals, context, content, and values and norms (Henderson, 2007, pp. 9–13).

### A Note on the Uses and Limitations of Theories and Models

This chapter has featured an array of theories and models that community practitioners should know. We now leave the reader with several caveats regarding social science, theories, and models. First, ideology is inherent in the social sciences and in their resultant theories and constructions

of reality (Bisman & Hardcastle, 1999). Theories are developed not only from our observations of nature but also from the paradigms and their underlying ideologies used to guide the observations. Paradigms and their ways of finding out about nature and have, according to Kuhn (1970), strong value and ideological components. They are, in fact, largely ideology. Paradigms organize and order our perceptions of nature according to their rules. Some of the theories and models are descriptive; others are prescriptive. Some of the theories simply describe certain aspects of nature, of human behavior and interaction. Other theories and models prescribe what should be and what should be done by social workers.

The models are not empirical reality but are mental constructions of reality. Community practitioners should take care not to reify the models—not to make the models reality (McKee, 2003). Rather, they should use the models to guide, construct, and understand the complexities of reality.

Our view and construction of reality strongly reflect symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969), a leading symbolic interaction theorist, held that symbolic interactionism “does not regard meaning as emanating from the intrinsic makeup of the thing that has meaning, nor does it see meaning as arising through a coalescence of psychological elements in the person. Instead, it sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people. . . . Thus, symbolic interactionism

sees meaning as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (pp. 4–5).

Symbolic interactionism’s emphasis, similar to that of assessment and case theory in practice, is on meaning. People tend to define, construct, and give meaning to their world partly as a result of their interactions with others, as we discuss more fully in Chapter 3. A practitioner needs to understand the meaning of the interactions and the social environment to the client, the client’s system, and the other systems of the change process if the practitioner is ever to understand the client’s behavior. The client’s constructions and meanings of reality, and hence the client’s world and opportunities, can be improved with changes in the client’s social interactions. A community practice task is to help the client establish new community interactions and hence to construct new realities with new meanings (Pozatek, 1994). Theory gives us a start on grasping what is happening around and within us, and practice models stimulate our imagination so we can make an effective beginning. Theory is not inherently healing, liberating, or innovative. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end. In summary, theories and models guide community practitioners. However, abstractions alone are insufficient. As stated earlier, in social work practice, such frameworks are melded with the political and the ideological.

### Discussion Exercises

1. “The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread” (Anatole France, *The Red Lily* (Le Lys Rouge), 1894, p. 89). Analyze and explain the statement from each theoretical perspective. Do conclusions differ?
2. Right out of our communities:
  - A group of affluent high school athletes takes a neighborhood girl with an IQ of 64 into a basement to sexually abuse her.
  - Members of a city council—citing tradition—refuse to move their town to higher ground, even with federal help. So once a decade the low-lying section, where poorer residents live, floods and the rest of the community pitches in to clean up.

Society often discusses complex motives in actual situations like those above. But aren’t the following positive

stories, pulled from newspapers, equally relevant to social work?

- A political dissident gives up his career and easy life because of his democratic principles but, after years, emerges from disgrace as a powerful national leader.
- A teenager forgoes the offer of a car and instead gives the money to a cause.
- A 7-year-old collects 1,000 suitcases for foster children so they no longer have to carry their belongings around in garbage bags.
- A student spends three years in high school creating a course (for credit) in peace studies.
- A man sells his business and shares \$130 million of the proceeds with his employees (who keep their jobs under the new management) to recognize their hard work.

What motivates people? Do motivation theories suggest that motivations can be shaped? What can

community practitioners glean from theory to understand, encourage, or stop any of the above actions?

Divide into two teams. Pick two theories from the chapter. Then debate whether the 7-year-old's efforts are useless; that is, by collecting the suitcases for children in foster care, was the 7-year-old just treating the symptoms? Just making the "haves" feel better? Or is a need for dignity met by this act, so that the effort should be appreciated?

3. What is the difference between feminist theory and feminism, in your view? What do radical-right commentators such as Rush Limbaugh mean by "Femi-Nazi"?

4. Do you know a professional whose work involves locality development, social planning, or social action? How does that person's work differ from Jack Rothman's models?

5. Does your fieldwork involve any interventions described by Jeffries (capacity and awareness promotion, partnership promotion, nonviolent direct action, social campaigns)?

6. Analyze anti-globalization street protests, first in theoretical terms and then as models of organizing.

## Notes

1. The movie's line given by the editor of the *Shinbone Star* Maxwell Scott to Senator Ransom Stoddard, the man who shot Liberty Valance, but didn't. "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962).
2. Data from <http://webb.senate.gov/pdf/prison-factsheet4.html> retrieved July 17, 2009.
3. Data from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00046149.htm> retrieved July 17, 2009.
4. Retrieved July 20, 2009 [http://www.vpc.org/fact\\_sht/fadeathwithrates65-04.pdf](http://www.vpc.org/fact_sht/fadeathwithrates65-04.pdf)
5. Retrieve July 20, 2009 <http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/f/flu/deaths.htm>
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